

III. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Setting of the Research

This research exercised a classroom-action research (CAR), since it is a type of research that is based on the problem encountered in the classroom and is concerned with how the teacher will solve such problem. The research was based on the teacher's information and the pre-observation that had been performed previously, which revealed that the students had very low performance in writing ability. For that reason, the research would investigate whether the application of a different technique would bring about improvement in the teaching-learning process of writing skill.

In this research, the researcher acted as the observer and the original English language teacher of the class as the teacher, who would teach narrative writing through the application of learning community. Another English language teacher, who taught grade two, would help the researcher by acting as a collaborator to deal with the observation in the classroom during teaching-learning process using learning community since this teacher was more familiar with each student's character and ability and more experienced with classroom teaching-learning than the researcher.

The lesson plans were made by the researcher based on the scheme of learning community activities, and the teacher performed in the classroom based on these plans. Thus, during the research, the researcher assisted by the collaborator teacher would observe everything that occurred in the classroom. The focus of the observation was on students' learning activities as well as important and relevant occurrences that would occur in the classroom during the teaching-learning process.

The participants of this research were a class of grade-two students (Class XI IPS 2) of SMAN 8 Bandar Lampung, consisting of 32 students with 20 females and 12 males. The students were of mediocre level among the second-graders in the school in terms of their scores in narrative writing. In addition, the students of the school in overall were also observed not really active while learning English in the classroom, specifically while doing writing activities. According to the researcher's pre-observation on those students, it was concluded that most of the students had low ability in writing skill. It was obviously very disappointing since they should reach point 66, the pre-determined minimum score (KKM or *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal*) to pass the exam. Accordingly, the indicators of the learning process could not be achieved, in terms of both learning activity and learning product.

3.2 General Description of the Research

While the teacher was applying learning community in the classroom, the observer and the collaborator were observing the teaching-learning activities to identify any weaknesses to be improved in the next cycle. Students' writings were scored by both the researcher and the regular teacher. The results of the writing

test were then analyzed, together with the results of the observation. Furthermore, reflection on the analysis results was performed to decide whether any subsequent cycle would be needed or not.

3.3 Research Procedures

In classroom-action research, the number of the necessary cycles may vary.

Before the research proceeds into the classroom, how many cycles are going to be performed to meet both the objective and the indicator of the research could not be identified accurately. The first cycle is conducted based on the problem of the research, and the second one is carried out after the analysis and reflection from the first cycle. However, each cycle has the following main steps: (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting (Arikunto, 2006:16). These stages are illustrated as follows:

3.3.1 Planning

Planning is the stage where the problem causes are identified. By knowing the causes, the focus of the problem can be formulated in the importance of the implementation that will be given. After deciding what the problem and the causes are, the appropriate technique is selected. And based on the problem and the teaching technique, the materials and teaching aids and the type of the test are planned. To get a complete series of data, a rater is involved to observe the teaching-learning process.

3.3.2 Implementing/Action

Action is the part of the cycle where the researcher as an observer. While teaching, the silent observer (i.e. the observer) and the collaborator will take focus

on observing students' learning activities as well as important and relevant occurrences that may occur in the classroom during the teaching-learning process. In this stage, the lesson plan which has been made before will be used and learning community technique implemented for teaching writing of narrative text.

3.3.3 Observing and Interpreting

The researcher will be assisted by a partner, either as an collaborator or as the teacher while the researcher is performing as the silent observer who will take a note or do the observation on the teaching-learning activity. All the important occurrences during the teaching-learning process will be recorded for the purpose of analysis.

3.3.4 Reflecting

In this step, the result of the writing test as the learning product will be analyzed, together with everything that have occurred in the teaching-learning process based on the observation sheets. It is done to find out the improvement after the implementation of learning community in the teaching of narrative writing. In the analyses, the researcher together with her partner will do some reflection to discover the weakness(es) and strength(s) of the implementation of learning community, and also to identify the problem faced by both the teacher and the students during the teaching-learning process. By doing so, what improvements should be made for the next cycle can be determined. If the indicators of the research have not been met in the first and in the second cycles, some steps would be planned to make betterment in the next, i.e. the third, cycle.

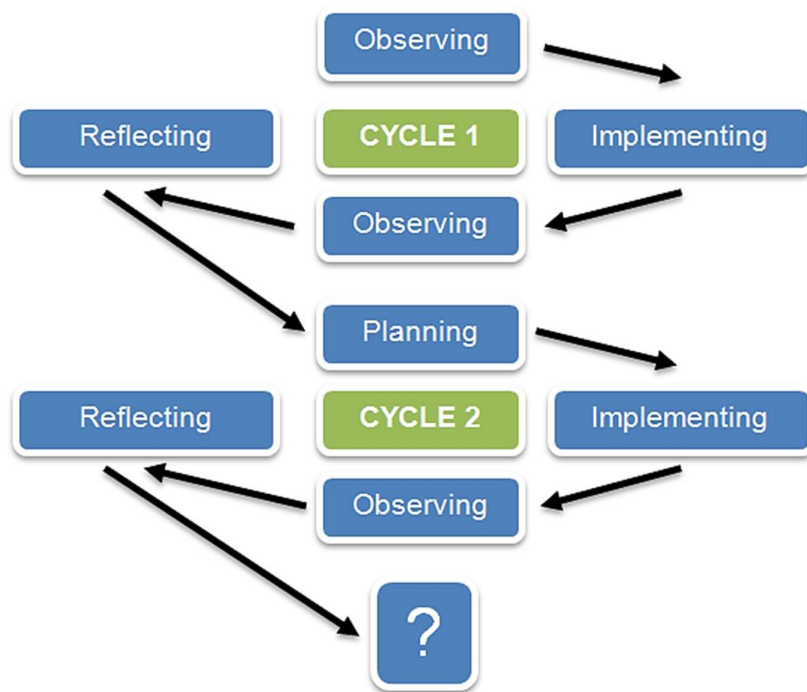


Figure 3.1 The cycles of a classroom action research (adapted from Arikunto, 2006:16)

3.4 Indicators of the Research

In order to see whether learning community technique could develop students' writing ability or not, this research relied on some indicators concerning the learning process and learning product, as described below:

3.4.1 Learning Process

In terms of learning process, there were two aspects which became the focus of this research: the students' activities and the teacher's performance. The observation of the process of teaching was based on the lesson plans made by the researcher and the real process in the classroom, which covered preactivity, while-activity, and post-activity. The target was that 75% of students were active during the process and that the teacher obtained 80 for his performance score—which

included doing apperception, mastery of learning materials, learning strategy, use of learning media, building students' active involvement, evaluation and reflection.

Student's activity and teacher's performance were assessed by the collaborator and the researcher based on the criteria in the respective observation sheet. It was expected that the teacher could get score 80 for her teaching performance with the implementation of learning community. Therefore, if the teacher could reach that target, her teaching performance would be categorized as *good*. For the teaching performance, there were some aspects to score, i.e. the teacher's activities in preactivity, while-activity, and post-activity.

The target determined by the researcher in terms of students' activity was 75%. Hence, if 75% of the students were actively involved in their classroom learning activities while learning community was being implemented, it means that learning community could make the students active. 75% was determined as the target based on Arikunto's (1993:210) criterion that 75% or more students who are actively involved in teaching-learning activities indicate a good level of students' participation.

3.4.2 Learning Product

The target score of the learning product was 66 as this number was the pre-determined minimum score (KKM) set by the school for English subject. Thus, if at least 75% of students' scores reach 66 or more for the writing narrative task, it means that learning community is applicable to improve students' writing ability achievement. Scoring criteria adopted from Jacobs (1981:90) were applied in this case, in which five writing aspects were evaluated, i.e. content, organization,

vocabularies, language use, and mechanic. Jacobs (1981:90) has determined the percentage of each of these aspects as follows: 30% for content, 20% for organization, 20% for vocabulary, 25% for language use, and only 5% for mechanic.

Below is the classification of scoring criteria adopted from Jacobs (1981:90) combined with Hughes's (1989:91):

Content

30 – 27	Excellent to very good: development of topic, relevant to assign topic.
26 – 22	Good to average: some knowledge of subject, adequate range, mostly relevant to topic but lack detail.
21 – 17	Fair to poor: limited knowledge of subject, inadequate development of topic.
16 – 13	Very poor: doesn't show knowledge, not pertinent, or not enough to evaluate.

Organization

20 – 18	Excellent to very good: ideas clearly stated/ supported, well organized, logical sequencing, cohesive.
17 – 14	Good to average: loosely organized, but main idea stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing.
13 – 10	Fair to poor: ideas confused or disconnect, lacks logical sequencing and development.
9 – 7	Very poor: doesn't communicate, no organization, or not enough to evaluate.

Vocabulary

20 – 18	Excellent to very good: Occasionally uses in appropriate terms; expression of idea hardly impaired.
17 – 14	Good to average: Uses wrong or inappropriate words fairly frequently; expression of ideas may be limited because of inadequate vocabulary.
13 – 10	Fair to poor: Limited vocabulary and frequent errors clearly hinder expression of ideas.
9 – 7	Very poor: Vocabulary so limited and so frequently misused that reader must often rely on own interpretation.

Language use

25 – 22	Excellent to very good: effective complex construction, few errors of agreement, tense number, word order/ function, articles, pronoun, preposition.
---------	--

21 – 18	Good to average: effective but simple construction, minor problems in simple construction, several errors of agreement, tense, word order/ function, articles, pronouns, but meaning seldom obscured.
17 – 11	Fair to poor: major problem in complex/ simple construction, frequent errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/ function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, deletions, meaning confused, or obscured.
10 – 5	Very poor: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicate, or not enough to evaluate.

Mechanic

5	Excellent to very good: demonstrated mastery of conventions, few errors spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing.
4	Good to average: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, but meaning not obscured.
3	Fair to poor: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor hand writing, meaning confused or obscured.
2	Very poor: no mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuations, capitalizations, paragraphing, handwriting illegible, or not enough to evaluate.

3.5 Instrument of the Research

To gain the data, the researcher applied two kinds of instruments: writing tasks and observation sheet.

3.5.1 Writing Tasks

The first instrument used in getting the data was a series of writing tasks. Heaton (1991:137) suggests that writing can be a useful testing tool since it provides the students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to organize language material, using their own words and ideas, and to communicate.

Therefore, the writing tasks were used to elicit students' achievement in writing. However, it should be noted that these were tasks, not tests. The tasks were part of the teaching-learning process using learning community, in which the students were provided with writing activities to write narrative texts. The tasks

steps were consistent with the stages of the application of learning community technique and described in detail in the lesson plans (see Appendix 1).

3.5.2 Observation Sheets

Observation was conducted in each cycle during the teaching-learning process. Throughout the teaching-learning process, the collaborator and the observer were observing the process happening in the classroom while the teacher was teaching. Structured observation sheets were used to identify the students' activities as well as the teacher's performance in the classroom. So there were two kinds of observation sheets that had to be filled out by the observer and the collaborator, i.e. the observation sheet for the students' activities and that for the teacher's performance. These two sheets of observation are presented below and on the next page.

OBSERVATION SHEET OF STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES

No.	Student's Activities	Student's Code			
		A	B	C	etc.
1	Preactivities • Responding to the topic enthusiastically.				
2	While-activities • Paying attention to the teacher's explanation.				
	• Responding to the teacher's questions.				
	• Following the teacher's instruction (work in group) and doing the task (make a draft of narrative story or text).				
3	Post-activity • Able to respond to the teacher's question.				
Percentage of Student's Activities (%)					

Figure 3.2 Observation sheet of students' activities

OBSERVATION SHEET OF TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE

No.	Aspects	Score
1	Preactivities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing an apperception. Informing the competence that will be achieved to the students. 	
2	While-activities <p>A. The Mastery of Learning Material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlating the material with other relevant knowledge. Correlating material with the real life. Achieving communicative competence. Using logical structure. Using language components. 	
	<p>B. The Learning Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing a teaching & learning process which is suitable with the competence. Doing a coordinated teaching-learning process. Doing a teaching-learning process which can build the students' imagination. Doing a teaching & learning process which is suitable with the time allocation. Emphasizing on using English in the teaching & learning process. Emphasizing on teaching the language skills in an integrated way. 	
	<p>C. The Use of Learning Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showing the skill in using the learning media. Producing an interesting message from the media. Involving the students in making and using the media. 	
	<p>D. Students' Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building the active participation of the students in the teaching & learning process. Giving positive responds to the students' opinion. Facilitating the interaction between teacher-student and student-student. Showing a conducive interpersonal relationship. Growing the students' enthusiasm in learning. 	
	<p>E. Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring the students' improvement after the teacher explains the lesson. Doing a final evaluation which is relevant to the competence. 	
3	Post-activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing a reflection/making summary of the lesson by involving the students' participation. Doing a follow-up by giving direction or tasks as a remedy. 	
	Total Score	
	Average Score	
	Description	

Description:

1. 40 – 59 : Poor
2. 60 – 69 : Enough
3. 70 – 79 : Good
4. 80 – 100 : Very Good

(Source: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2006)

Figure 3.3 Observation sheet of teacher's performance

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out after each cycle. In data analysis, the researcher classified the data into two categories: those of the learning process and those of the learning product. From the analysis and reflection, the weaknesses and strengths of each cycle were identified to define what should be improved in the next cycle.

3.6.1 Learning Product

To measure the improvement on the learning product, a writing task was used to elicit the students' writing. The following were the steps used to obtain and analyze the data from the writing task:

1. *Giving the writing task to the students.* The teacher gave some titles to the students, and asked them to write a narrative text based on the title they had selected.
2. *Scoring the students' writing ability.* Jacobs' (1981: 90) scoring criteria were used to score the students' writings. Scoring was carried out by the researcher and the teacher, scored per component of writing. It was done to know what component of writing that must be improved in the next cycle.
3. *Calculating students' total score.* Students' writing score is the average of the scores given by the raters. A single score is the sum of points on content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic.

$$X = C + O + V + L + M$$

X is student's writing score given by a single rater.

4. *Calculating the number and the percentage of the students who get ≥ 66 .* The percentage is calculated using the following formula:

$$%S = \frac{S}{N} \times 100$$

where $%S$ is the percentage of students who get ≥ 66 , S the number of students who get ≥ 66 , and N the total number of students in the class.

3.6.2 Learning Process

To get the data from the learning process, the researcher used observation sheets. The result of the observation sheet analyzed after a cycle is conducted. If the observation has done for observing the students' activities and also the teacher's performance, the researcher analyzed the result of the observation separately.

3.6.2.1 Students' Learning Activities

In analyzing the data get from observing the students' learning activities, the following steps were taken:

1. *Counting the number of activities done by the students.*
2. *Calculating the percentage of the students' activities.* For calculating the percentage of the students' activities, the following formula is used:

$$%A = \frac{A}{N} \times 100$$

in which $%A$ represents the percentage of students' activities, A the number of the students who are observed doing the activities, and N the total number of the students in the class.

3. *Making a description from the data that have been analyzed.*

3.6.2.2 Teacher's Teaching Performance

To analyze the data obtained from the observation on teacher's performance, the following steps were carried out:

1. *Counting the total score.* In this step, the scores from all aspects are summed. The aspects scored cover the teacher's activities in preactivity, while-activity, and post-activity.
2. *Making a description from the data that have been analyzed.* It is similar to analyze the students' activities, to analyze the teacher's performance the researcher also made a description from the collected data which could enrich and support the result of the analysis.